

Data on the New Jersey Outcome Indicators from Settlement Agreement

The following data provides baseline information on current and historical performance for seven of the eleven outcomes indicated per the settlement agreement. The data analysis comes from Chapin Hall and is presented by entry cohorts (i.e. all of the children who entered care in a given year). This is in contrast to the mostly point-in-time data (i.e. the look below of placement type of all the children in care on a given day) that states are required to report to the Federal government.

On 12/31/2002, there were a total of **10,886** kids in care in NJ with the following distribution of placement types.

Congregate Care	Shelter	Congregate Settings	Independent Living	Foster Care	Kin Care	Relative Support	Therapeutic Home	Family Settings
13%	3%	16%	1%	50%	12%	16%	5%	84%

Basic Frequencies of Cohort Data

The basic frequency data includes data from 1990 through the first quarter of 2003. It has been divided into 'first spells' and 'all spells' (care periods for kids that are entering the system a subsequent time).

- The total number of kids entering into care has been increasing since 1990. The 1990 cohort had 5,300 kids enter into care with the number rising to 6,948 kids entering into care in 2002.
- Of the almost 74,000 kids who have entered care since 1990, close to 2/3 of the kids were entering the system for the first time and 1/3 were re-entering the system.
- **Age:** During their first spell kids are distributed fairly equally by age with nearly 25% of kids in each of the following age quartiles: "Under 1," "1-5 years," "6-12 years," and "13-17 years." This is similar to national data.
- **Race:** The data for the 2003 cohort (with similar distribution for previous cohorts) shows that the disposition by race for children entering care across all spells is: 51.3% African-American, 29.5% White, 14.5% Latino, and 4.7% Other.
- **Sex:** The split between male and female kids has remained almost even, with the 2003 entry cohort being 49% female and 51% male.
- **Placement Type:** These data are for the 2003 cohort; for example, the chart below shows that 9.9% of kids who have entered placement for the first time in 2003 were initially placed into Congregate Care settings other than shelters.

	Congregate Care	Shelter	Congregate Settings	Independent Living	Foster Care	Kin Care	Relative Support	Therapeutic Home	Family Settings
First Spell	9.9%	9.35%	19.3%	0.22%	36.2%	36.2%	30.4%	0.79%	80.8%
All Spells	12.1%	13.3%	25.4%	0.76%	34.5%	12.3%	25.4%	1.6%	74.6%

- **Exit Type:** For the cohort of children who entered care in 1998 (5 years since entry) we see the following exit types;

	Discharged to Family	Discharged to Relative	Adoption	Guardian Support	Aged Out	Runaway	Other	Case Still Open
First Spell	54.7%	1.4%	15.9%	0.0%	1.6%	2.1%	13.8%	10.5%
All Spells	52.7%	1.2%	12..2%	0.0%	2.9%	4.2%	17.1%	9.7%

OUTCOME INDICATORS FROM THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The following data provides baseline information on current and historical performance for seven of the eleven outcomes indicated per the settlement agreement. The data analysis comes from Chapin Hall and is presented by entry cohorts (i.e. all of the children who entered care in a given year).

- A. Decrease the length of time in care for children with a goal of reunification.**
- B. Decrease the length of time in care for children with a goal of adoption.**

- For these indicators we are primarily interested in understanding the amount of time kids are spending in care before being reunified with their families or adopted.
- The numbers demonstrate the kids are not only entering the system in greater numbers but they are also taking longer to exit the system. This is a contrast to other systems nationally, where length of stay is generally decreasing.

Indicator A: Family Exit

The probability of a family exit within a year of entry for a child in his or her first spell has fallen fairly consistently from 50% in 1990 to 42% in 2002.

Indicator B: Adoption

Data show a fluctuating but overall increasing probability of exiting to adoption within 24 months over the past decade. The increases in recent years are likely due to ASFA goals.

- C. Increase the proportion of siblings in foster care who are placed together.** The data is available from the State, and Chapin is working on compiling the data for this indicator.
- D. Increase the proportion of children in foster care who are appropriately placed with relatives.** A push to enter free relative placements into the MIS system beginning in late 2000 and the introduction of the Relative Support program in January 2002 has greatly increased the percentage of kids who are placed through that program or either in Kinship Care. For kids in their initial placement the numbers shift from 8% of kids in the 2000 cohort to 40% of kids in the 2002 cohort.
 - Here, the difficulty lies in defining an indicator that accounts for children being placed ‘appropriately’ as indicated by the settlement agreement; the data right now only designates the aggregate number.
- E. Increase the proportion of children in foster care who are placed in their home neighborhoods.** Chapin has geographical data, and they are working on compiling the data for this indicator.

F. Decrease the incidence of abuse and neglect of children in out-of-home care.

All of our data on investigations include every incident reported while a child is in custody, both those where the alleged perpetrator is a substitute caregiver and those that involved, for example, alleged abuse or neglect that occurred on a home visit. The data is broken out by substantiated cases, unsubstantiated cases and unfounded (no evidence cases).

Some data points include:

- The data from 2000-2002 show that there have been around 1400 investigations of kids in state custody for each of the past three years. The 2002 cohort shows that 16% of the investigations were substantiated cases, 36% were unsubstantiated and 48% of the cases were unfounded.
- About 4% of the investigations that started in a given year involved children who were in substitute care at the investigation's start. As a proportion of the year-end population, the number of investigations that started while a child was in state custody has declined.

In each of the three years, the result of most investigations were wither that the event never occurred or the report was unsubstantiated; substantiated reports made up less than 20% of the investigations between 2000 and 2002. However, an expert report commissioned by plaintiffs concluded that a significant number of both unfounded and unsubstantiated cases should have been substantiated. This means that existing data may be of limited utility in setting a baseline against which future performance should be measured; it's quite possible that in the short run, an *increase* in the number of substantiated cases might be more encouraging than a decrease.

G. Decrease the proportion of children in out-of-home care who are placed in congregate settings. Chapin excludes kids in shelter care and only uses data on congregate care (residential care, group homes and supervised transitional living homes) for this indicator.

- The percentage of all kids entering into Congregate Care (CC) for each cohort averages around 15% over the last decade.
- Across cohorts 17% of kids were predominately placed in CC while in out-of-home care. The kids were three-quarters more likely to be teenagers and 2/3 more likely to be male. They are likely to be White if CC is a first placement although African-American kids are more likely to move to CC for subsequent spells.

H. Decrease the average number of placement moves experienced by children while in out-of-home care.

	Infants	1 year olds	2 to 3	5 to 7	8 to 10	11 to 13	14 to 18	Total
Foster Care								
0 moves	64%	57%	60%	59%	59%	60%	68%	61%
1 move	26%	27%	26%	23%	21%	18%	16%	24%
2+	10%	17%	13%	18%	20%	22%	16%	15%
Congregate Care								
0 moves	30%	50%	9%	60%	57%	70%	82%	69%
1 move	41%	38%	55%	40%	39%	21%	14%	21%
2+	28%	13%	36%	0%	4%	9%	4%	9%

In interpreting these data, it's important to remember that they describe the experience of all children who entered care, including those who had very short stays. The aggregate data in both congregate care and foster care show that more than 85% of kids have either moved once or not at all; however, a look at all the children in care on a given date would find that many more have moved.

- The state computer system is able to record moves by type, which would in theory give us the ability to track “positive” moves, e.g. to lower a level of care, and “negative” moves, e.g. from one foster home to another. However, this information is not consistently entered. It would certainly be helpful in observing changes in placement data following the forthcoming changes.
- I. Increase the proportion of children in care, and their families, who receive the services they need.** It is not possible to make these judgments based on the information recorded in the state's computer files, so it is necessary to find a way to capture this information through case record reading or some other vehicle.
- J. Decrease the rate of re-entries into out-of-home care.** The data show that since 1998 almost a third of kids re-enter the system within 12 months of exit and that older children are more likely to re-enter than younger children. For example, 32% of the cohort of children who have exited care in 2001 have reentered the system.
- K. Reduce the number of adoptive and pre-adoptive placements that disrupt.** These data can be determined from the data sent to Chapin but not easily or necessarily accurately. The State maintains that this is a small number of cases (but we do not currently know what ‘small’ represents.)